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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 011753

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [KJUS](#) [SNAR](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [CO](#) [AUC](#)

SUBJECT: PEACE COMMISSIONER DESCRIBES DEMOBILIZATION DETAILS

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons

1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) On November 12, Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo reviewed for the Ambassador recent developments in demobilizing the United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and clarified key steps in the process. Restrepo's principle concern is that without adequate security, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) could occupy AUC areas and gain access to key mobility corridors and coca growing areas, especially in the conflictive Catatumbo region. Meanwhile, the Catatumbo Bloc has submitted a list of names and identification numbers of those who will demobilize and the GOC has selected a demobilization zone. The GOC is beginning to receive lists, select demobilization zones, and prepare security for other AUC groups scheduled to demobilize before the end of the year.

2. (C) Restrepo detailed parts of the demobilization process:

- Monitoring: He asserted that monitoring former paramilitaries' behavior was key to the process' legitimacy but emphasized that local government and police had to cooperate with him.

- Identification: Restrepo will consider issuing each individual demobilizing a provisional identification card when they enter the demobilization zone.

- Interviews: Each demobilized paramilitary is required to report to a local reinsertion center to be interviewed by the Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia), with whom he must cooperate. If this does not happen, the individual would not be pardoned for having belonged to an illegal armed group and would be arrested.

- Renunciation: Before leaving the demobilization zone, each individual is required to sign two documents: one renouncing membership in an illegal armed group and the other requesting pardon for the crime of sedition. End Summary.

Security Biggest Challenge

3. (C) Restrepo said his biggest concern was securing the Catatumbo region in Norte de Santander Department, where 1,400 paramilitaries are scheduled to demobilize in the coming weeks. He explained that the AUC controls territory around the Catatumbo River thereby depriving the FARC of a key mobility corridor into Venezuela. The security forces' presence is minimal. The Navy does not patrol the Catatumbo River and there is no police or military presence west of the river, where the government estimates there are 1,800 hectares of coca. Restrepo is worried that without patrols on the river and an increased presence on the ground, the FARC would occupy the former AUC territory, especially the coca-growing areas. Restrepo would like at least four Navy patrol boats on the river and aerial and manual eradication of coca.

4. (C) Restrepo warned that a FARC takeover of the demobilized region would de-legitimize the peace process and strengthen the AUC's negotiating position. AUC Commander Salvatore Mancuso has already threatened to halt demobilization if the government cannot prevent the FARC from taking over Catatumbo. Restrepo hoped the U.S. could provide support for security, but noted that he had not yet discussed this idea with President Uribe.

5. (C) In a subsequent conversation, Ambassador raised Restrepo's concern about Catatumbo with Armed Forces Commander General Ospina and Navy Commander Admiral Soto. Both already were aware of the issue, and promised at least some level of action. We will follow up.

Some Zones Identified, Lists Submitted

6. (C) Restrepo described recent progress:

-- Catatumbo: The Catatumbo Bloc, led by a retired Police Captain "Camilo Catatumbo," submitted a list of 1,400 members to demobilize, including 900 full names and cedula (national identification document) numbers. The Fiscalía, Department of Administrative Security (DAS, rough FBI equivalent), police, and military intelligence have begun researching the names. The Bloc also submitted a list of weapons, which includes 470 rifles, 350 pistols, and several machine guns. A two-hectare demobilization zone about 28 kilometers from the town of Tibu has been selected (reported in the press on November 14). During the week of November 15, the government will prepare the zone's infrastructure. The publicly announced target date of November 29 for formal demobilization will probably be pushed back a week or two.

-- Uraba: The government has identified a demobilization zone but the AUC groups operating in Uraba have not submitted a list. The AUC's territory in Uraba is relatively controllable, and Restrepo has been working closely with the Army's 17th Brigade to develop a strategy to protect it. The police have a permanent presence in much of the region. The only potential problem area is the Nueva Antioquia region where the FARC and AUC have competed for control.

-- Valle and Valle del Cauca: The Calima Bloc is scheduled to demobilize there but has not submitted a list and the government has not identified a demobilization area. Restrepo is concerned about security because the FARC has a strong presence and could regain key mobility corridors.

-- Cordoba: Mancuso submitted a list of several hundred names and cedula numbers. Restrepo expects his biggest challenge to be winning public trust. The population there generally believes the AUC is needed for its safety and has little faith in state security forces.

-- Llanos (eastern plains): Since AUC Centauros Bloc Commander Miguel Arroyave was killed and the independent Self Defense Forces of Casanare (ACC) have suffered heavy military blows, the region has become more stable and less violent. However, demobilization of the AUC groups is complicated. The Centauros Bloc has broken into two groups, one led by "Mauricio," a former guerrilla, in the north and the other led by "Jorge Pirata" and "Cuchillo" in the south. AUC commander Miguel Mejia, who is in Santa Fe de Ralito, offered to demobilize the 300-member Vencedores of Arauca but insisted that his twin, Pablo Mejia, be included in the demobilization. Both brothers are major drug traffickers and Restrepo has refused to let Pablo participate in the demobilization. The paramilitaries and the FARC groups operating on the eastern plains are deeply involved in drug trafficking, making any demobilization complicated.

----- Law for Justice and Reparation -----

17. (C) After the GOC's last draft of the Law for Justice and Reparations was completed in April under the supervision of the Peace Commissioner's Office, Restrepo asked President Uribe to put the Ministry of Interior and Justice in charge of the bill. Given the AUC's dislike of the legislation, Restrepo said negotiating with the AUC and being responsible for the law put him in too difficult a position. Restrepo has not seen Senator Rafael Pardo's version of the law.

----- Monitoring -----

18. (C) In response to the Ambassador's comment that close monitoring of the demobilized paramilitaries was key to preventing paramilitaries from returning to criminal behavior, Restrepo said he needed the local governments and security forces to cooperate with him. He expressed frustration with the Medellin city government's reluctance to punish or even publicize crimes carried out by demobilized members of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc (BCN). To prevent similar problems in future demobilizations, Restrepo's office hired a police Colonel to help coordinate demobilizations with local police units.

----- Identification, Investigation, and Renunciation -----

19. (C) Restrepo agreed with the Ambassador's suggestion that each paramilitary be given a provisional identification card upon entering the demobilization zone.

110. (C) In response to the Ambassador's concern that each demobilized member be interviewed by the Fiscalía, Restrepo clarified that the former paramilitaries are not pardoned for rebellion until they speak with the Fiscalía at the government-controlled reinsertion centers. Upon leaving the demobilization zone, each former paramilitary is required to

report to a local reinsertion center. At these centers, the Fiscalia interviews each former paramilitary, dental records are taken to verify identity, a pardon for sedition is issued after a thorough investigation by the Fiscalia, and each individual enrolls in reinsertion programs. Any former paramilitary who fails to report to one of these centers or cooperate with the Fiscalia's investigation can and will be arrested for having belonged to an illegal armed group. Restrepo also is creating an intelligence team that will interview the paramilitaries while still inside the demobilization centers.

11. (C) Restrepo underscored that before leaving the demobilization zone, each paramilitary is required to sign two documents: one renouncing his/her membership in an illegal armed group and pledging not to return to criminal behavior and one requesting pardon for rebellion against the state. Without signing these documents, the individual is not eligible for reinsertion benefits.

WOOD